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ABSTRACT

This handbook and a companion video are intended for use by adult education programs interested in implementing a court referral program for adult education. It highlights the Preparation for Employment Program (PEP), a special project of the Shoals Area Tri-County Adult Education Program that requires offenders lacking minimal basic skills to enter the local adult education program. The handbook provides information on literacy and incarcerated persons in order to establish factual evidence that something must be done to change the cycle of events leading up to a person's release from jail. An overview of the court referral program is followed by detailed procedures for court referrals. These four phases are described: Phase 1--organizations/goals/objectives (meeting with agencies); Phase 2--developing paperwork (routing system, paperwork); Phase 3--implementation (roles and responsibilities for these agencies: adult education, judges, Department of Human Resources, District or County Attorney, and juvenile, adult, and federal probation officers); and Phase 4--follow-up/tracking. A day in an adult education class is then outlined. The following sample forms are appended: order to complete court referral evaluation; evaluation and recommendation--preparation for employment program; orders to appear in court; adult basic education checklist; General Educational Development Program progress checklist; and PEP project report. (YLB)

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Time Alternative:

A Sentence of Life Improvement

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Introduction

In our combined thirty-five years of working with undereducated and disadvantaged adults, our paths crossed with many professionals in community services who were frustrated by attempts to help those who could not help themselves because of the lack of literacy skills. This was evidenced in a school for fourth time D.U.I. offenders who were required to do extensive reading from their manuals. Our adult education program began working with the D.U.I. school to ascertain reading levels of the participants and found that over three-fourths of them lacked comprehension skills above the sixth grade level and of this three-fourths over one-half were reading below fourth grade level. Several participants were nonreaders.

The local judges were very concerned that many of these D.U.I. offenders were repeat cases with no improvement evidenced between their court appearances. Upon meeting with court officials, it was decided that adult education personnel would attempt to coordinate a reading class with the D.U.I. school. From this beginning sprang the concept of sentencing these multiple offenders to attend class to improve their reading skills. Further involvement produced other offerings to the defendants of studying for their GED test and preparation for employment through preemployment skills development.

From the beginning concept of helping D.U.I. school participants with reading skills, the educational alternative sentencing program was developed. We are pleased to offer you a "TIME ALTERNATIVE: A SENTENCE OF LIFE IMPROVEMENT."

"TIME ALTERNATIVE"

The video you have just received is an overview of how one community responded to needs concerning undereducated adults involved in the court systems. Considering the facts that prisons are overcrowded with upwards of eighty percent (80%) of the inmates without a high school education, and approximately sixty percent (60%) of these inmates functionally illiterate, their chances of achieving success on-the-job or at home after leaving prison are virtually nil. The Shoals Area Tri-County Adult Education Program, the Department of Human Resources, judges, probation officers, district attorneys, and others concerned with court referrals came together to offer one solution to the problem.

The recidivism rate for inmates is approximately eighty-five percent (85%) unless they receive further education, such as, a General Educational Development (GED) diploma, high school diploma, or job preparation skills. Of the inmates who earn their GED, the recidivism rate is about fifteen percent (15%).

According to the "Business Council for Effective Literacy Newsletter", Vol. 1, No. 9, October 1989, *"The statistics are staggering but hardly surprising: over eighty-five percent (85%) of the juveniles and sixty-five percent (65%) of the adults incarcerated are functionally illiterate. No one would argue that there is a direct causal relationship between illiteracy and crime, but a look at a broader picture points to a hot connection:*

> *As many as fifty percent (50%) of adults in federal and state prisons cannot read or write at all. Nearly two thirds have not completed high school. About one-fourth have not even completed elementary school.*
>
> *The majority of people in prisons are poor. The average unemployment rate for offenders prior to arrest is about forty percent (40%) compared to the national average unemployment rate of about seven percent (7%). Of those employed, more than two-thirds earned less than a poverty level salary prior to arrest.*
>
> *Numerically, whites in the general U. S. population by far outnumber blacks and other minorities. But blacks, comprising of only twelve percent (12%) of the general population, make up nearly half, forty-seven percent (47%) of prison populations. Other minorities in prison are similarly disproportionate to their numbers nationwide.*
>
> *The majority of inmates are male (96%). But among four percent (4%) who are women, many are single mothers with two or more children, on welfare, and troubled by physical or mental ill health, drugs, and/or alcohol dependance.*
>
> *Most inmates are young enough to have full lives ahead of them. In the state prisons, more than half are between 20 and 30 years old; almost one-third between 20 and 24.*
>
> *Eventually, ninety-five percent (95%) of all those in prison return to society. The average length of incarceration is two to three years. (But this is being*

extended. With the growing "get tough" attitude that is leading to harsher, less flexible sentences. New federal guidelines, for example, call for convicts to serve the full term as sentences with no time off for good behavior and no parole. At present, most federal prisoners are eligible for parole after serving one-third of their term).

Approximately 150,000 inmates are released each year, but a very high percentage estimates range as high as 70% will wind up back in prison within a year of their release. If these inmates are released without the capacity to read a want ad or fill out a job application, it is virtually impossible for them to find good jobs. Literacy and basic skills programs raise an inmate's competency level. With the prison system bursting at the seams, how long can we go on incarcerating more and more people? And in the end, isn't the public better served by prisons with the capacity to function as responsible members of society?"

The following quotation comes from the July 1991 issue of "Adult Learning and Literacy", Washington, D.C., the Federal Bureau of Prisons states that: *"Beginning this year, Federal prisons will require all inmates without high school diplomas to attend adult education literacy classes for a minimum of 120 days or until they attain a General Equivalency Diploma (GED). Previously, the standard had been the equivalent of an eighth grade skills level . . . it must continue to establish literacy standards that reflect those in communities to which Federal prisoners will be released for available jobs and cope with post-release community, family, and related responsibilities."*

This final provision from Congress for the National Literacy Act, signed on July 25, 1991, includes a section on prison programs. According to the "Report on Literacy Programs", July 25, 1991, the act states in part, *"To qualify for federal funding, all such programs would have to make use of "advanced technologies" to whatever extent possible and would have to require that every inmate in the specific institutions or statewide system involved who is not functionally literate must participate in the program until they achieve functional literacy, or, in the case of a disabled inmate, until they achieve a level of literacy commensurate with their ability; or until they complete their sentence or are released by court order; or until they are granted parole.*

The law stipulates that any inmate who is not otherwise exempted and who refuses to participate could not be granted parole, unless the state parole board decides to waive the prohibition in a particular case . . .

The law requires that states receiving federal funds for literacy programs will submit plans for implementing state-wide literacy programs, even though it does not actually require them to implement anything beyond demonstration programs . . ."

Literacy and basic skills programs raise competency levels which builds self-esteem while advancing educational levels in order to make court referrals more employable. Research has shown a high correlation between illiteracy and low income level, unemployment, industrial inefficiency, public assistance and crime. Estimates vary, but many put the cost to the taxpayer at five billion dollars annually in welfare and unemployment compensation. The cost of maintaining an inmate in prison ranges from $14,000.00 to $35,000.00 per year. According to a report of the Texas Literacy Council, "Developing Human Capital", *"The illiteracy rate among prison inmates is appalling, reflecting a school dropout rate of upwards of seventy-five percent (75%). It costs Texas $35,000.00 per year to maintain each inmate."*

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"Literacy" is defined in broader terms as it is realized that possessing just basic reading and writing skills will not suffice in America in the 90's. In addition to reading and writing, functional literacy requires oral communication, problem solving, decision making, and computational skills. These skills reflect the ways individuals use their literacy skills to perform tasks in the home, community, and workplace.

The preceding information on literacy and the incarcerated was presented to establish factual evidence that we must do something to change the cycle of events leading up to a person's release from jail and for establishing a worthwhile life while moving into the economic mainstream of society.

OVERVIEW OF THE COURT REFERRAL PROGRAM

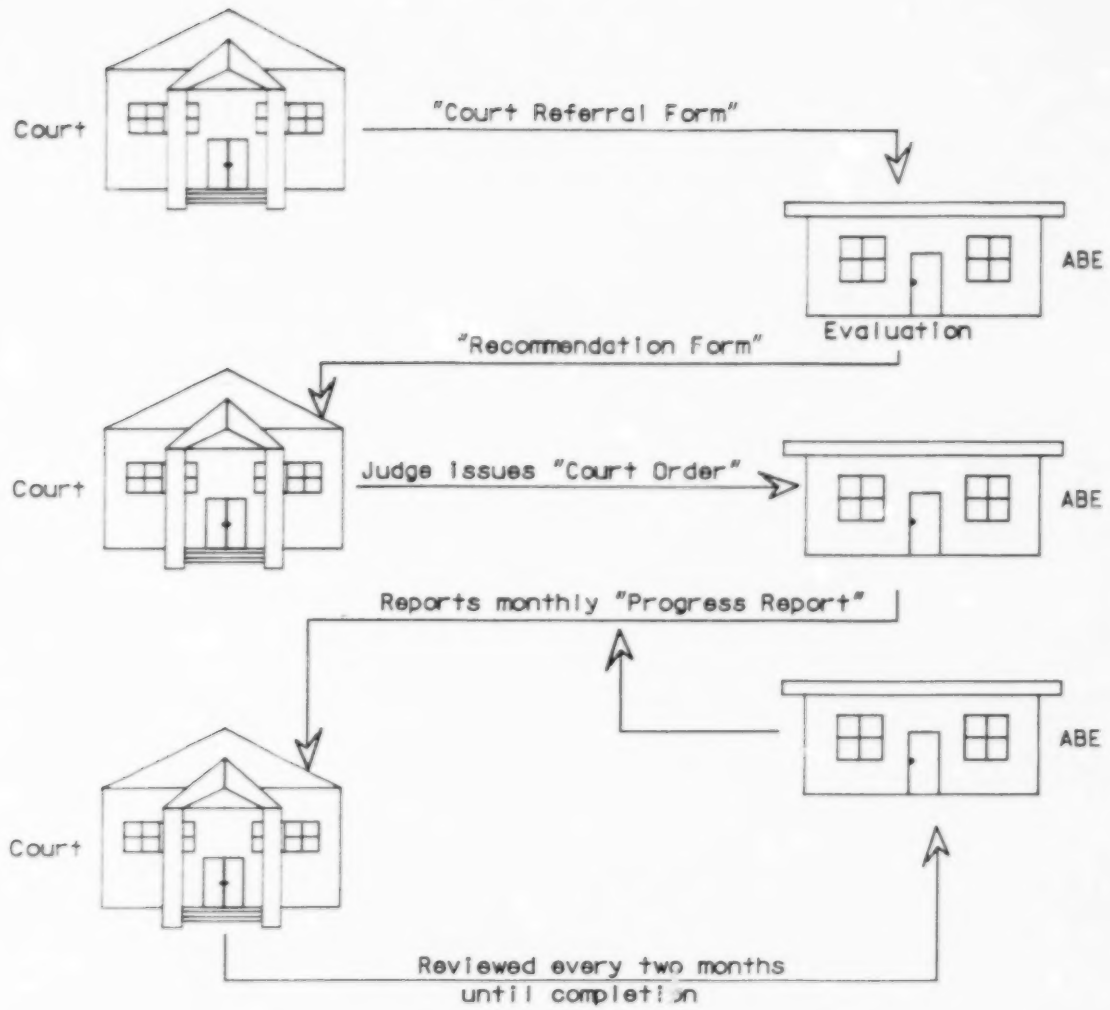
When a defendant appears before a judge, one alternative in the sentencing process is to add a requirement of upgrading educational skills. Depending upon the educational background of the defendant, a basic skills course, a high school equivalency diploma (GED) preparation, and employment skills preparation can decrease the defendant's chance of recidivism.

This decision in sentencing requires a cooperative and collaborative effort on the part of several agencies. The adult education program in the community is responsible for developing the educational program and the process by which defendants improve their educational level to be competitive in the economic workplace. The judge must have an adult education program available for defendants to attend in order to give a directive for educational assessment and improvement.

At the beginning of adult education alternative sentencing, the adult education supervisor and the instructors designated to work with the court referrals attend court on sentencing dates and should be prepared to address the courtroom as to all programs offered by the local adult education program. The selected instructors, after a few weeks, will begin to establish a working relationship with the court system staff. The instructors will be notified of sentencing dates and/or their required testimony if a court referral has not been coming to class. Judges have enforced the required class attendance and have, on occasion, sentenced noncooperative probationers to five days in jail.

In discussing court referrals, there is always the question, "How do you teach a person who resents being in class?" The key person in this phase of the court referral program is the instructor. Adult education instructors need to be apprised of their new "clientele" and should be chosen for not only their teaching ability but for their warmth, caring, and enthusiasm for education. They must also be prepared to listen to problems, and to help court referrals "mainstream" their way back into society. Mainstreaming is an important phase in the court referral program. It is preferable that the court ordered attendees mix into the regularly scheduled adult education classes. This allows socialization skills to become a part of the educational process.

Court Referral Process



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PROCEDURES FOR COURT REFERRALS

PHASE 1 ORGANIZATIONS/GOALS/OBJECTIVES

Meeting with Agencies

The initial planning and organization of goals and objectives are considered in face-to-face meeting(s) with all organizations involved. They include representatives from: adult education, the local judges, Department of Human Resources, and the district/county attorney's office and probation officers.

The first meeting includes:

(1) discussions concerning the needs of the courts and Department of Human Resources
(ie: child support, probation)

(2) any financial obligation
(ie: printing costs of forms to be used)

(3) areas of responsibility for each agency
(see Phase 3, implementations)

Future meetings, if needed, would be to clarify or redefine objectives.

PHASE 2 DEVELOPING PAPERWORK

Routing System

Communication among agencies is essential to ensure success. It is through this reporting network that all parties are kept informed of referrals and their progress. A copy of suggested forms are in the Appendix and may be used or adapted by individual programs as needed.

Paperwork

Court Referral Form (Appendix A) This carbonized form is completed by the Department of Human Resources or a court representative and signed by the judge on the first court appearance. A return court date is set. The purpose of the "Court Referral Form" is to officially order the defendant to be evaluated by the adult education program. Two different formats are available for use. Failure to go to classes to be evaluated is usually followed by a bench warrant.

Preparation for Employment (PEP) Evaluation and Recommendation Form (Appendix B) Each PEP participant is evaluated both formally and informally by adult education teachers. Standardized diagnostic testing and interviews are used in the evaluation process. The "Evaluation and Recommendation Form" has four progressive courses of study listed.

They include:

(1) basic skills coursework
(2) GED preparation
(3) refresher training for postsecondary entry
(4) job preparation

The adult education instructor completes the form and sends each agency a carbon copy. This form has two purposes:

(1) to apprise the courts of the referral's academic and employability levels, and
(2) to recommend a course of study

Court Order (Appendix C) These documents vary among judges. Two have been included for duplication; however, variation may be needed depending upon the type of case being presented in court. After a recommendation has been made by the adult education staff, the judge mandates the defendant into the PEP Program. The orders are reviewed every two months to determine progress or satisfactory completion of PEP. If the coursework has not been completed or a job has not been secured, then the order is reissued and reviewed at a later court date. The purpose of reissuing the court order is to make the judge's decision legal and binding.

Progress Report (Appendix D) This form is used to inform the referring parties about PEP participants' attendance and progress. It is sent by the adult education instructor to the referring agency monthly.

Miscellaneous (Appendix E) There are two other forms used monthly. The courts or Department of Human Resources sends a form to adult education which lists new referrals, those released from PEP, and the next court date. These forms are very useful as an ongoing way to update referrals. Many times the PEP participants are released from PEP when they find jobs or when circumstances arise that a judge allows release. The forms in Appendix E serve as an essential reporting component to avoid participants from "slipping through the cracks."

PHASE 3 IMPLEMENTATION

This plan of action is to be used as a guide and adjustments can be made to suit any judicial system's alternative sentencing program. Once the initial meeting of setting goals has been accomplished, there will be a clearer picture of each agency's role and area of responsibility.

Let us first take a look at each agency.

Adult Education

Classes are provided on a continuous basis throughout the year to help adult learners achieve their educational goals. Those referred by the courts are sent into regular adult education settings. Some programs prefer that the court referrals be isolated in a class specifically for them, but our suggestion is that these learners should not be treated differently. A large part of adult education is the atmosphere in which it is presented. All negative stigmas of school are avoided. If at all possible, day classes are preferred for two reasons. First, participants are encouraged to act responsibly by arriving at school close to the same time as one would begin a work day, which establishes marketable work ethics. Second, day classes are generally longer than traditional adult education evening classes. Participants are ordered to attend classes for a minimum of fifteen (15) hours per week. This gives ample learning time for in-class work and enough time to actively search for a job.

Once a referral is made from the courts, a standardized diagnostic test is given to determine the educational deficiencies in the areas of reading, math and language skills. Interviews are conducted informally to access the individual's ability to secure employment through resume' writing, interviewing techniques, and job seeking skills.

"Evaluation and Recommendation" forms are completed and sent to judges for their consideration when the defendants are sentenced. Classes are available immediately after the evaluation. Many decide they can find a job and are employed by the first court appearance. Others choose to wait until the court order is in effect from the judge before beginning classes.

Judges

The role of the judges is vital to the success of the program. It is through the "court order" that PEP participants realize the seriousness of the program. Successful judicial participation requires that the judges will mandate recommendations made by the adult education staff.

The first referrals were defendants in child support cases, but PEP soon began to play a significant role for other court cases. This alternative sentence can be used as a means of improving the lives of those defendants who appear before the judge. Many need the "official" push to get past the negative memories that school held while they were growing up.

Department of Human Resources

Identification of court referred nonsupport participants is a major responsibility of the DHR. A DHR representative, usually a case worker, along with the assistant district attorney, will talk with defendants who are scheduled on the court docket regarding child support cases. At that time, the defendants are offered a payment arrangement for their child support arrearage. If no agreement can be reached, the judges will "court order" the defendants into PEP to see what is preventing them from finding employment. Unreported income by the defendant has historically been a problem in the collection of child support payments. Requiring the attendance of day classes often interferes with the unreported job and puts the defendant into the uncomfortable position of having to "pay up" or attend class. Those not working will report to class to receive an evaluation and gain marketable skills.

District or County Attorney

The district attorney's office selects a designated representative. This person is responsible for representing the state. There are times when the adult education instructor will be needed to testify on behalf of the state regarding the defendant's attendance, attitude, and progress. Some judicial systems have Child Support Enforcement offices. A representative from that office is included in the referral system. Their function is to talk with the defendants and act as a liaison between the defendant and the district attorney or assistant district attorney.

Juvenile, Adult, and Federal Probation Officers

Probation officers find the referral system a way of offering the offenders a "second chance." The opportunity to receive educational training and job seeking skills as a condition of probation is an appealing alternative. Initial contact is made by the probation officer to the adult education instructor. Once the referral is made, progress reports containing attendance records and academic improvements are sent by adult education to the probation officer on a monthly basis. This process continues until educational objectives are met or probation is completed.

PHASE 4 FOLLOW-UP/TRACKING

Learner progress is determined by standardized instruments; program quality is ensured by a sound curriculum and professional staff development. However, accountability goes beyond learner progress and program quality. It is also founded in establishing goals that are realistic and attainable in the context of an adult's life. An exit interview is desirable for the following reasons: to get feedback on meeting learner goals, to discover what was most or least helpful, to set long term goals, and to secure a commitment to keep in contact for tracking purposes. Success stories and avoidance of pitfalls encountered by participants can be a valuable source of information for those currently in the program and for new referrals.

A six month follow up meeting helps to gather information for tracking purposes and is used to see if the participants are working on their goals. Accountability is important for the courts and other participating agencies to validate their efforts in an alternative sentencing program.

A DAY IN AN ADULT EDUCATION CLASS

(AN INFORMAL INTERVIEW IS SCHEDULED WITH EACH PARTICIPANT BEFORE BEGINNING CLASSROOM WORK. THIS IS IMPORTANT NOT ONLY TO ESTABLISH RAPPORT, BUT ALSO TO SET INDIVIDUAL GOALS).

Classes begin at 8:00 A.M. with learners signing in as they arrive. For those learning job skills, this is important for establishing responsibility, as many will have jobs that require maintaining time cards.

After signing in learners retrieve their folders of work material from a filing system and, with the help of instructors and volunteers, begin studies for the remainder of the class. Learners sign out as they leave each day.

Each adult education learner is given an individual prescriptive study guide which is determined by a standardized diagnostic test. This assessment establishes an entry level and targets specific learning deficiencies to eliminate wasting an adult's valuable time. Small group instruction, computer assisted skill builders, and individualized instruction are incorporated for a well-rounded educational experience.

Once a learner has completed the prescription guide and has mastered proficiency at each skill level, post-tests are given to determine exit levels. The post-tests are also helpful to assess the readiness of participants to attempt tests such as GED or postsecondary entry tests.

Day programs are preferred and strongly recommended if at all possible, with the rationale being that if a court referral is not working, the learner needs to begin a day of study as one would begin a day of work. When day programs are unavailable, a variation with structured evening classes may be substituted. If the evening classes do not offer enough in class study hours, arrangements may be made to have additional contact time documented by volunteers. Trained volunteers meet with learners outside the classroom at times agreed upon by both parties to continue lessons prescribed by the teacher.

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Order To Complete
Court Referral Evaluation

Juvenile Court of **County**

CASE NO IV-D#

DEFENDANT NAME AND ADDRESS			DEFENDANT INFORMATION				
(FIRST)	(MIDDLE/MAIDEN)	(LAST)	SSN	1	2	3	4
(STREET)			STATE	DRIVER LICENSE NUMBER			
(CITY)	(STATE)	(ZIP)	DOB	MO	DAY	YR	

1. In addition to searching for employment, the Defendant named above shall report to Adult Basic Education Classroom or her designated instructor between the hours of 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. one day during the period of _____ for evaluation of job skills.

2. FAILURE TO APPEAR FOR TESTING AS ORDERED SHALL RESULT IN CONTEMPT OF COURT PROCEEDINGS AND POSSIBLE JAIL SENTENCE.

3. Report back to court on _____

BRING YOUR EVALUATION BACK TO COURT WITH YOU.

4. FAILURE TO APPEAR BACK IN COURT WILL RESULT IN YOUR IMMEDIATE ARREST.

Done and ordered this _____ day of _____, 19 _____.

White Copy - Court Record
Green Copy - Defendant Copy
Canary Copy - Referral Agency
Pink Copy - ABE
Goldenrod Copy - ABE Ret.

_____
Judge

_____
Defendant

Appendix A-2

Order To Complete Court Referral Evaluation

☐ Circuit
☐ Juvenile **Court of** **County**

Style_____ Case #_____ IV-D #_____

Defendant Name and Address

First	Middle	Last
Street		
City	State	Zip

SSN	
State	Drivers License #
DOB Mo	Day Year

1. In addition to searching for employment, the Defendant named above shall report to Adult Basic Education program at _____ to see _____ or her designated instructor between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. one day during the week of _____ for evaluation.

2. _____

_____

_____

3. **FAILURE TO APPEAR AT MUSCLE SHOALS TECHNICAL SCHOOL AS ORDERED SHALL RESULT IN CONTEMPT OF COURT AND POSSIBLE JAIL SENTENCE.**

4. Report back to court on _____.

5. **FAILURE TO APPEAR BACK IN COURT WILL RESULT IN YOUR IMMEDIATE ARREST.**

Done and ordered this _____ day of _____, 19____

_____
Judge

_____
Defendent

White Copy - Court Record
Green Copy - Defendant
Canary Copy - Referring Agency
Pink Copy - ABE
Blue Copy - ABE Return
Goldenrod Copy - DHR

Appendix B

EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATION

PREPARATION FOR EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

NAME _____ IV-D NO. _____

REFERRED BY JUDGE _____

GRADE PLACEMENT _____

RECOMMENDATION:

_____ Attend and participate in the Adult Basic Skills Course at least 15 hours per week until the course is successfully completed.

_____ Attend and participate in the GED Preparation Course at least 15 hours per week until a GED is obtained.

_____ Attend and participate in the GED refresher course at least 15 hours per week until the course is successfully completed.

_____ Attend and participate in the Pre-employment Course and successfully complete it.

All classes will be held in the Adult Basic Education Classroom , and taught by or her designated instructor.

Other Comments or recommendations: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____ _____

DATE SIGNATURE

Appendix C-1

STATE OF_____
_____COUNTY

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF _____
COUNTY, (STATE) _____

STATE OF _____

CASE NO. _____

vs

(NAME OF DEFENDANT)

ORDER

The defendant appeared in open Court in person and represented be counsel this being the day set for his probation hearing. After having considered the probation report, the Court does split the defendant's sentence as follows: The defendant shall serve three weekends in the County jail of the sentence heretofore imposed upon him, to begin (date, time) , and ending (date, time) and a like time three consecutive weekends. It is a condition for the defendant's probation that he reimburses the (county) Commission the sum of ($) per day that he is incarcerated. The remainder of the sentence shall be suspended for a period of probation which shall be for (time).

It is further a condition for the defendant's probation that he pays all amounts of restitution, court costs, and reimburses the State of (name) the attorney's fees in this cause.

It is further a condition for the defendant's probation that he attends the Preparation for Employment Program at
(class site) and reports to the probation officer on (date, time). It is further a condition for the defendant's probation that he completes recommendation made by (adult education instructor) at said Preparation for Employment Program at (class site). The defendant shall in lieu of such unexcused attendance perform fifty hours community work at an organization to be designated by the Court and approved by the probation officer during the defendant's period of probation. The defendant was instructed to report to (class site) , and report to jail on the (date, time) and was admonished to complete and comply with the conditions for his probation.

Done and ORDERED at (court location), this the (day) of (month, year).

Presiding Circuit Judge

Appendix C-2

STATE OF

COUNTY

IN RE: THE MARRIAGE OF

(wife's name)

AND

(husband's name)

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF

(county, state)

CASE NUMBER

ORDER

This cause coming before the Court on the PETITION FOR DIVORCE and the same being set for a hearing on the (date) and with the parties being present with their respective attorneys and testimony and evidence being taken, the COURT makes the following findings:

1. The COURT finds that the parties are 18 and 17 years of age, respectfully, who married (date) and have a child namely: (name, age of child).

2. The COURT further finds that the parties are unemployed.

3. The COURT further finds the parties are incompatible and incapable of existing together as man and wife.

4. The COURT further finds that the parties have an 8th and 9th grade education.

The court considering these findings and other testimony and evidence as taken in open court, it is therefore

ORDERED, ADJUDGED and DECREED by the COURT that the bonds of matrimony heretofore existing between the Plaintiff and Defendant be, and the same are henceforth dissolved on the grounds of incompatibility. It is further

ORDERED, ADJUDGED and DECREED by the COURT that the Plaintiff and Defendant be, and hereby are permitted to again contract marriage subject to such provision of the law as regulate the marriage of divorced persons and pending appeal which may be taken by either side . . . It is further,

ORDERED, ADJUDGED and DECREED by the COURT that (name) shall have the full care, custody and control of the minor child of the parties, and (name) shall have reasonable visitation rights at reasonable times and places. It is further,

ORDERED, ADJUDGED and DECREED by the COURT that (name) is to be evaluated by the Adult Basic Education Program, and (name) is to report to (adult education instructor) for said evaluation for the Preparation for Employment Program on (date, time).

Done and ORDERED this (date).

Circuit Judge

Appendix D

A.B.E.-G.E.D. PROGRESS CHECKLIST

Name: _____

Month ending: _____ / _____ / _____
Mo Day Year

1) Was the individual prompt to scheduled classes or appointments?

Days/Classes - Present _____

Days/Classes - Absent _____ Reason: _____

2) Did the individual complete assigned work/homework in a timely manner?

_____Yes _____No

3) Is the individual "grasping" the material?

_____Yes _____No

4) Does the individual appear to be making a reasonable amount of progress?

_____Yes _____No

5) Estimated GED test date: _____

6) What subject(s) does the individual seem to have the most difficulty with?

Comments and/or Recommendations:

_____
Signature of Person Completing Report

_____
Title

_____ / _____ / _____
Date: Mo Da Yr

Appendix E-1

Shoals Area Adult Education Program
PEP Report

(Preparation for Employment Program)

_____
(month)

New referrals Return to court date

Relieved from PEP

Active PEP Clients Return to court date

Next court date _____

Return to:

Appendix E-2

PREPARATION FOR EMPLOYMENT REPORT

PEP REPORT FOR THE MONTH OF_____

THE FOLLOWING ARE NEW REFERRALS

RETURN TO
COURT DATE

THE FOLLOWING HAVE BEEN RELIEVED FROM PEP

THE FOLLOWING ARE STILL ACTIVE PEP CLIENTS

RETURN TO
COURT DATE

EVALUATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ARE NEEDED ON OR BEFORE COURT DATE LISTED

WORKING WITH COURT REFERRALS
and
OTHER RELUCTANT ADULT EDUCATION PARTICIPANTS

BY: LIZ ANDERSON, DIRECTOR
SHOALS AREA TRI-COUNTY ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Shoals Area Tri-County Adult Education Program is beginning a sixth year project funded by the United Way of the Shoals Area. Eight years ago, as Tri-County Director, I was working in cooperation with the D.U.I. school to provide offenders with information on how to go back to school. Observing first hand the lack of basic reading and writing skills of the participants, we contacted judges and court officials to propose a basic skills program. The response was favorable and a first attempt was made to require offenders lacking minimal basic skills to enter the local adult education program. Eventually, several circuit and district court judges, Department of Human Resource personnel, and District Attorney representatives met with local adult educators and planned to put "teeth" into the program.

The most pressing issue besides the D.U.I. program was the nonsupport parent. The courts continued to see nonsupport parents appearing before them who could neither read nor write, or had no high school diploma, and could not, or would not, find and hold a job. These individuals were deemed the most in need. And soon, the Shoals Area Tri-County Adult Education Program began to compile information from the courts and the Department of Human Resources in order to devise referral forms and reporting forms to the judges.

The first year (1987) of this special project, Preparation for Employment Program (PEP), was underwritten with regular adult education funding. It proved to be well received, successful, and in need of more manpower, materials, and hours. The judges wanted to make sure that the "non-working," nonsupport parents were really not employed and withholding child support payment. These persons were "sentenced" to 15 hours a week in adult education classes. These offenders were requested tc report to the judge every six weeks. After a two month implementation of adult education classes, the Department of Human Resources reported an overwhelming improvement in child support payments. They gave credit to the PEP Program for being one of the factors involved in this high rate of improvement.

At present, the United Way of the Shoals Area is partially funding the PEP Program, which requires 15 hours a week in each of three counties for nonsupport parents who are learning to read and write, prepare for their GED, receive preemployment skills training, and counseling involving self-esteem and family values. The program has

grown to include parolees, probationers, and other offenders that the court systems deem in need of basic skills training.

The successes are many. Several have learned to read and write, several have improved their basic skills, learned job seeking techniques, passed their GED, and have become employed. The one most observable difference in "before" and "after" as we work with these participants is their attitude toward others and themselves. Many come in unkempt, defiant, and resentful of the fact that they are "sentenced to go to school." Within two weeks they begin to take notice of their appearance; their attitudes change as they realize that what has happened to them is a good thing.

The single most important element in the process of change for the court ordered participant is the caring and perceptive attitude of the instructor. The instructor is part teacher, counselor, social worker, and friend to the student. The new adult student most often has never met with much success in any walk of life: personal, school, and/or job. Instructors are patient and encouraging, and provide every student with a sense of personal dignity, many of whom can barely read or write. These court ordered participants come complete with tattoos, earrings (men), wild clothing, and sometimes unusual behavior which never seems to ruffle the unflappable (bless them) instructors. Students are given individual assessments as to abilities, provided with individually prescriptive materials, as well as preemployment skills.

The Shoals Area Tri-County Adult Education Program is very fortunate to have a reading laboratory provided through donations of business, industry, municipalities, and the Shoals Chamber of Commerce. This lab provides basic reading instruction (up to three grade levels improvement in 20 weeks), computer literacy and touch typing skills to adults and young people who could not read and write when they entered the program. This high-tech, computerized, laser disc reading program is provided in addition to individualized one-on-one instruction through the use of volunteers as well as advanced GED preparation study skills.

In the state of Arizona, Dave Byers, deputy director of the Administrative Office of the Court says, "for years we've noticed a correlation of adult and juveniles on probation and the fact that they are without high school diplomas, and functionally illiterate. Not only are we looking at reading and writing improvement, but self-esteem, employment skills, improvement in types of jobs and outcomes related to recidivism." His statements are probably typical of the

needs in all states; and at present, the prisons, jails, and courts are extremely overburdened with criminal offenders, especially juveniles.

The Shoals Area Tri-County Adult Education Program begins its 8th year in court referrals, having added to and refined the program during the first three year period. The program now has in place a working communication with probation officers, juvenile probation officers, district attorney's offices, Department of Human Resources, and judges within the three counties. Service is provided or available to all adults and juveniles 16 years of age and older.

Through a grant from the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Shoals Area Tri-County Adult Education Program developed a video and manual to share with other programs interested in implementing a court referral program for adult education. The video and manual are available at our cost from our office. We have made presentations to various groups about the program. A random sample of those benefiting from the presentation: State Judges Associations, District Attorney's Associations, State Magistrates Training, State Adult Education Supervisors Training, State Bar Associations, Department of Human Resources Supervisors Training, and local groups, such as civic clubs, business groups, etc. The manual and video have been demonstrated as far away as Washington state, Kentucky, Texas, Kansas, Mississippi, Georgia, South Carolina, as well as several other locations. Our staff is available to do training at no cost; we only require travel and per diem.